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SUBJECT: Niger: Amb. Allen's Outgoing Calls on Senior GON
Officials

¶1. (SBU) Ambassador spoke with Government of Niger (GON) Prime Minister (PM) Gamatia, Foreign Minister Mindaoudou, and President Tandja, respectively, on January 11, 13, and 14, during departure calls.

¶2. (SBU) No new ground was broken on the political front, though the PM expressed surprise at the suspension of the U.S.-funded scholarships for youth in the vocational training programs (PDEV). Ambassador responded that as a consequence of the GON's turn away from rule of law and unconstitutional, undemocratic acts, all non-humanitarian aid was suspended. She added that education and vocational training programs were not deemed to meet the USG definition of humanitarian aid, and consequently fell subject to the suspension. (Note: On state television, Tele-Sahel, it was announced that the GON would use the President's Special Fund to pay for the scholarships for the 1000+ youth in Niamey that were affected by the suspension. There was no mention of any action to be taken to accommodate the 3000+ youth who were to begin vocational programs in the regions of Maradi and Zinder, located in central and eastern Niger, respectively. End note.)

¶3. (SBU) Ambassador closed her remarks by stating disappointment at the current political circumstances that prevented the USG from going forward with important programs, such as those in the education sector, which had been initiated to benefit Nigerien youth. All three GON officials spoke from the same script and reiterated that Niger had taken a new path based on the "will of the people."

WHITAKER